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### **New Jersey Awarded Federal Funds for Charter School Development**

Commissioner of Education William L. Librera today announced that the New Jersey Department of Education will receive \$11 million in federal funds over the next three years to support the development of charter schools throughout the state. The state will receive \$3 million in 2002-03 as the first installment of a federal commitment to charter schools under the Public Charter Schools Grant Program.

"We are pleased to have these additional resources available for charter schools to enhance their ability to operate successfully," Commissioner Librera said. "We invite our eligible charter schools to apply for these funds."

"This grant award gives New Jersey an unprecedented amount of funding to expand quality public school choice for students and their families and to share the successes of those charter schools that are performing at the highest levels," said Richard Ten Eyck, assistant commissioner for the Division of Educational Programs and Assessment.

New Jersey's grant award will support a subgrant program for eligible charter schools. Funds are targeted to support preliminary program planning and design and initial implementation of new charter schools. A percentage of the grant is also designated for dissemination of successful charter school practices that show promise of improving student achievement in other New Jersey public schools.

"These grants represent opportunities to encourage innovation and replication of exemplary programs, as well as resources to develop new partnerships to promote quality education," said Rochelle Hendricks, manager of the Charter School Unit in the department's Office of Innovative Programs and Schools. "We look forward to the possibility of all public schools, both charter and traditional, working together to provide New Jersey's families with exceptional public school education and real choice."

Grants will be used to fund activities such as: measuring student progress; refining the educational program; developing curriculum materials; providing professional development for teachers and administrators; acquiring necessary equipment, materials and supplies; and informing the community about the charter school. In addition, successful established charter schools will be eligible for dissemination grants to be used to assist others with the planning and startup of a charter school; develop partnerships with other schools to promote sharing of successful practices and strategies; and develop and share materials about proven practices in order to increase student achievement.

Charter schools are public schools operated under a charter granted by the Commissioner of Education. Each charter school is independent of the district board of education and is managed by a board of trustees. They have the flexibility to experiment with innovative strategies and techniques in order to improve student achievement.

Charter schools are held accountable for student performance and for meeting objectives delineated in their charters. Founded by parents, teachers, and/or community leaders, charter schools offer a viable model for building public schools that encourage parental involvement in determining the educational needs of children.

New Jersey currently has 50 charter schools serving nearly 13,000 students operating in 15 counties. The average enrollment in a charter school is 190 students and the average class size is 17 students. In July, the Department of Education received eight new applications for charter schools that would open September 2003 or September 2004. The Commissioner is now reviewing those applications and will announce the results of his review in mid-January 2003.

For more information about charter schools in New Jersey, visit the Department of Education Web site:

**[www.state.nj.us/education](http://www.state.nj.us/education)**

and click on "Charter Schools" under Organizational Overview.